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ABSTRACT

Three workshops conducted by consultants will help faculty members at Midway College in Lexington, Kentucky, incorporate effective writing instruction in the content areas. The first workshop will stress the importance of reading and writing to the learning process and provide concrete exercises that demonstrate how writing can be used to generate ideas and to find organizing principles for the practice and improvement of writing. The second will stress the modes of discourse and the importance both of understanding aims and audiences and of using the feedback generated by peer review. It also will provide useful assignments the faculty can use in their classes. The third workshop will deal with evaluation, particularly multiple drafting and peer review. (Appendixes describe the topics and strategies for the three workshops.) (JL)

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TEACHING WRITING AS A LEARNING PROCESS: ASSIGNMENTS AND EVALUATION STRATEGIES

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NEH SUMMER INSTITUTE FOR WRITING IN THE HUMANITIES

BEAVER COLLEGE

GLENSIDE, PENNSYLVANIA

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Preface

During these past four weeks while I have been gathering information about conducting faculty development workshops, Elaine Maimon and Jerry Belcher have been tactfully reminding me about "the difficulties that prophets experience in their own countries." It seems predictable to me that the faculty may hesitate before accepting teaching techniques new to them. Taking heed to their warning, I have judiciously selected the most persuasive material for explaining the most applicable concepts and for demonstrating the most useful teaching strategies included in the Writing-Across- the-Curriculum Program at Beaver College, in order to convince the faculty at Midway College of the effectiveness of this program and of our responsibility as instructors to teach writing not only in Freshman Composition I and II, but throughout all content areas and all levels of learning. Before I return to Midway as a novice prophet, I wish to take advantage of this opportunity to share with you some future events and changes that I predict for teaching writing at the College, based on the insights gained during my study these past four weeks in the Institute. All of us participants as novice prophets have shared in revelations, some of which seem mystical, for example, "ponds in Michigan freeze down to the bottom," "students who do not attend regular classes are known as irregular students", "emeralds are grue and bleen", and "dead cats are different from live cats". Now, "moving right along..."

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In the preparation of this grant proposal, I owe thanks to Wayne Gebb, Martha Gehringer, and Lynn Kelley for their assistance in planning the original proposal for the grant application. To Odis Hill, my team member from Danville who made my participation in the NEH Summer Writing Institute possible, I am indebted for his supportive comments and knowledgeable dialogue. I am also especially grateful to Elaine Maimon for creating the opportunity to study at this Institute, to Marie Lawrence for her persistent graciousness in anticipating and accomodating participants' needs, and to the staff Peggy Horodovick, Barry O'Connor, Jerry Belcher, Gail Hearn, Barbara Noding, and Carol Schilling for teaching us so aptly that we were able to feel acceptance in their community of scholars and for providing exceptional models for our imitation. Specifically, I appreciate Jerry Belcher, my advisor, for his guidance and encouragement for this novice prophet metaphor that I hope will continue to evolve productively outside the Beaver College community in order for me to share writing across the curriculum with my colleagues at Midway College. In addition, I sincerely appreciate Barbara Miesen for her unselfish willingness to type my first rough draft. Finally, I thank all of the participants of the Institute for their supportiveness and advice, particularly those who collaborated with me on the revision of my proposal, including Ellery Sedgewick, Jim Miesen, Charles Majure, Odis Hill, Martha Wall, and Dorothy Grimes. Not only was this dialogue with high school and college colleagues intellectually stimulating and extremely entertaining, but it was delightfully reaffirming regarding the commonalities that exist among teachers of composition, especially their dedication.

Writing as a Learning Process:
Assignments and Evaluation Strategies

Midway College, a private two-year liberal arts college for women, is located approximately fifteen miles north of Lexington and fifteen miles south of Frankfort, Kentucky, in a small town appropriately named Midway. Roughly, fifty per cent of the three hundred and fifty students enrolled at the College reside on campus, and fifty per cent of them commute. While many of the faculty members at Midway are interested in requiring their students to write more frequently and with a better sense of purpose, they are uncertain about the teaching strategies that will enable them to incorporate this writing into their course plans. Some feel unsure about choosing effective methods to motivate their students--particularly those students in more technically oriented programs--to want to learn to write well and to perceive writing as a skill integral to their personal and professional lives. For this reason, I am proposing that the College offer three workshops during the academic year 1982-83 on the following topics: writing as a learning process, assignment strategies, and evaluation strategies. My role in these workshops will be a facilitator who will take care of physical arrangements of the workshops and plan for visits of outside guests. My plan for structuring these workshops consists of bringing in consultants to introduce and to explain topics and to direct the faculty in collaborative learning groups to work through tasks that require practical application of the strategies and concepts presented in each of these sessions. These workshops will be scheduled during in-service days for Danville High School in order that high school

faculty can attend. By issuing an invitation to this faculty, I hope to open and establish a line of communication between the College and the high school.

Although several faculty members want to include more writing in content classes, some problem areas exist that must be dealt with in carrying out this proposal. For example, one of Midway's largest two-year programs is an Associate of Arts Degree in Nursing that comprises about thirty-five per cent of the student enrollment. The rigidity of the time frame for a two-year degree program in nursing does not allow any humanities requirements, only six hours of composition. Furthermore, a few of the nursing instructors feel uncomfortable about teaching writing because of their own negative experiences with college composition courses or because of their lack of training in composition. However, we have all probably had English instructors who tried to prove that the red pen is mightier than any sword, unaware that the red pen had an even sharper cutting edge. Nevertheless, the nursing faculty's greatest reservation stems from the large amount of content material that must be presented in lecture classes. In addition to this problem, an end of the year faculty workshop on "Linking Nursing with Humanities" revealed that some nursing faculty felt that humanities insructors were trying to tell them how to teach. (Otherwise known as "Here comes the prophets of humanity again" syndrome.) Hopefully, this misunderstanding no longer exists. Also, faculty in other areas such as biology, psychology, business, and math, have expressed their concern for improving writing

skills, but they have also indicated feelings of uncertainty regarding making writing assignments, methods for evaluating writing and finding sufficient time to do the additional grading. Ironically, some English instructors who teach literature experience this same sense of unpreparedness when confronted with teaching beginning composition, because some have never been taught, nor have even thought about the strategies that are involved in teaching writing. Elaine Maimon refers to this as "the dirty little secret of our profession." Consequently, the problems of teaching composition are more pervasive perhaps than one would suspect.

In spite of these problem areas, many other factors at Midway College suggest a positive reaction to these proposed workshops. For example, we currently have a NEH Grant for "Linking Nursing with Humanities" which could possibly provide a source of funds to pay for travel and lodging for consultants from the Beaver College staff for these workshops. The acquisition of this grant has already resulted in a successful seminar entitled "Nursing Ethics", during which the students role played ethical situations and discussed their reactions. The humanities faculty assisted the instructors in this project. Therefore, this grant created some initial dialogue between the faculty in the humanities and in nursing.

Still another positive indicator is the fact that in the Spring Workshop of 1981, the faculty voted unanimously to recommend to the Board of Trustees the hiring of a full-time writing laboratory instuctor. This was prompted by a feeling of responsibility for the many students with writing problems and the belief that the College should provide an instructor

trained in teaching writing skills for our Learning Laboratory, in order that students could practice and thereby improve writing skills. Unfortunately, we were only able to hire a part-time writing laboratory instructor, but the sentiment was there. In addition to working with the Literature and Languages faculty to improve writing skills significantly, this instructor offered seminars such as "Writing for an Essay Exam" and "Research Paper Writing."

Also, my serving as Coordinator for the Arts and Humanities Division and as a member of the Academic Council has given me the opportunity to observe the concerns expressed by members of the Division and the faculty as a whole during the 1981-82 academic calendar year. Improving writing became a more focused need as the writing laboratory instructor began to work closely with other members of the faculty. Productive collaborative learning experiences resulted from working with the laboratory instructor, and the important connection between teaching writing and content courses became evident.

Finally, a request by faculty for three one-hour open block discussion sessions for each semester, in addition to the monthly faculty meetings, suggests both the desire and need for more opportunities to converse with peers, as well as a respect for the value of dialogue within the teaching community. This dedication of our faculty, combined with previously mentioned factors, and my positive experience in the Institute, convince me that a majority of the Midway College faculty might be receptive to many of the concepts and teaching strategies that are used in Writing Across the Curriculum at Beaver College.

Faculty Development Workshop I: Writing as a Learning Process
(Late September, Early October)

Goals: The goal of the first one-day workshop will be to inform the faculty

of current theories that stress the importance of reading and writing in tne learning process in all content areas and to provide them with concrete exercises that will demonstrate how writing can be used to generate ideas and to find organizing principles for the practice and improvement of writing. The idea of peer review as a time saving device, as well as learning strategy for students, should be introduced as a persuasive element for the faculty.

Audience: The audience towards whom this workshop will be directed is anyone who is not convinced that writing is an integral part of the learning process, anyone who feels uncomfortable with his own writing skills, and any faculty members who feel that they do not have time to include writing assignments in their courses. The audience should also include any nursing faculty who may have been slightly alienated to the humanities area by end of year faculty workshop.

Content: At the first workshop I would like to invite Jerry Belcher to discuss the Back to Basics Movement, to identify misconceptions regarding the aims of this movement, and to explain the reasons why reading, writing, and thinking are the most fundamental skills that should be taught in all areas of a curriculum. In addition, the distinction should be make between public and private writing; and the concept of writing in progress, including stages for discovery, drafting, and revising, should be discussed.

Rationale: The most convincing evidence for anyone who does not believe in the power of writing as a part of the learning process would seem to be his own involvement in discovery and invention. Completion of these exercises should develop confidence, alleviate many anxieties about writing, increase knowledge of thought processes, and change the focus of problems in writing away from structure, or surface features, to focus on writing for discovery. The reason

for using Bruffee's collaborative learning groups is that this method reinforces discovey, or invention, by drawing out ideas in dialogue with peers. (Dialogue is supported as a teaching method be Aristotle's Rhetoric.) Participating in two demonstrations of collaborative learning theory in class directed by Ken Bruffee, and the continued use of this method by instructors of the Institute, have made me aware of the advantages of having varying points of view and a group consensus. This approach has been tested in late night problem solving in logic, in peer review of this proposal to this point of my work in progress, and in navigating around Philadelphia with maps that were most assuredly designed to baffle tourists' minds. The astonishing fact that we survived the Schuylkill, or "Sure Kill" Expressway, attests to the effectiveness of this heuristic or learning device. However, further support for this theory seems inherent in James Britton's belief that "Teachers have many reasons for being interested in learning processes. Their involvement with all of the learning processes of their pupils requires that they understand how something came to be written, not just what is written."

Format: The plan will include a one-day faculty development workshop directed by an outside consultant facilitated by me. Bruffee's learning groups of five will be used in demonstration exercises. This same format will be used in the next two workshops.

Workshop II: Assignment Strategies

Goals: The goal of the second workshop will be to give the faculty a review of various modes of discourse, to ask them to identify the audience and the aims of writing that they require in their particular content areas, to stress the importance of a student's knowing the aim and audience in a writing assignment, and to provide the faculty with useful assignments that will guide students in both reading and writing to learn and that will demonstrate that content objectives

must be stated clearly and in an organized manner. Another goal is to emphasize the importance of the immediacy of feedback involved in peer review and the expediency of this method. Faculty also should be convinced of the need for teachers to write and to read with their students, in order to provide role models for them.

Audience: This workshop will be directed towards those college and high school faculty who are convinced (or perhaps undecided) about teaching writing with content in all areas.

Content: Ideally, Gail Hearn will conduct this workshop on the topic of assignment strategies; however, if funds are not available for her travel and lodging expenditures, Odis Hill has agreed to assist in conducting this workshop in exchange for my assistance with workshops at Danville High School.

Rationale: Once many faculty members have been informed of common misconceptions regarding students' capabilities, or Errors and Expectations as identified by Mina Shaughnessy, as well as methods for improvements in making assignments, they will be motivated to experiment with these teaching strategies. Also, I anticipate some willingness to experiment with peer review as a means of providing the student with immediate feedback, allowing the student to assume responsibility for revising and thereby reducing the amount of time required for the instructor when assuming full responsibility for the revision process.

Workshop III: Evaluation Strategies

Goals: The goals of this workshop are to explain further multiple drafting and to demonstrate peer review. Other objectives are to assist the instructor in giving feedback on drafts and final papers and to demonstrate how this process should operate in a conference situation.

Audience: The audience will include those high school and college faculty who have attended previous workshops and who are interested in learning more about the process for peer review and the strategies for evaluating writing.

Content: This workshop will consist of a review of writing as a learning process and assignment strategies, as they relate to peer review, and the evaluation of the final drafting of paper. The concept of multiple drafting, as a natural element in the process of writing, and the necessity of keeping file folders constantly accessible for students will be explained. The process of peer review, a device that generates feedback, will also be defended as a means to provide frequent reading and writing practice. Focused grouping and Fader's triads will be explained, and the evaluation of final drafting will be described as a brief conference situation including concise and positive comments for the improvement of final drafts.

Rationale: The most convincing evidence for peer review, in addition to reducing the work load of the instructor, will be the fact that the approach socializes the classroom and improves student achievement by placing responsibility for revision on the student (Beyer, p. 23), and the evidence that indicates that working in triads as recommended by Fader and as cited in Beyer, p. 23, not only enables students to help each other to improve their writing skills, but also helps them to improve reading skills.

During the process of writing this proposal, I visited the Franklin Institute, a leader in advancing science and technology. Its goal is to help people to understand the world around them, by challenging them to think creatively about alternatives for the future and to prepare people for the world of tomorrow. During a trip back into the past in an exhibit of the various time keeping mechanisms, I was impressed by this quotation by William Hazelitt: "The mind of man is like a clock that is always running down and requires constantly to be wound up. The ideal principle

is the master key, and sensual and selfish feeling are the dead weights that pull it down to the gross and grovelling." It occurred to me that Writing Across the Curriculum could offer such a master key; its principles challenge us to provide our students with a broader and more liberal education, an education that frees the mind to view our fascinating and ambiguous world with a sense of wonder, as opposed to a technical training including strictly performance oriented tasks. Can we as educators afford to refuse any attempt to experiment with these ideas and to deny our students and ourselves this challenge to our creativity because of our fear of the unknown? Benjamin Franklin chose to risk flying his kite in an electrical storm in order to discover for himself and for humanity a new source of energy? Can we dare to do less?

Appendix

Topics and Strategies for Workshop I: Writing as a Learning Process

1. Introduce and discuss Ken Bruffee's theory of collaborative learning. He says the best writing is done collaboratively because one can discover ideas by drawing them out in dialogue with peers. (Aristotle supported dialogue in the Rhetoric.)

2. Define private writing and explain that it is a good teaching strategy because it encourages invention and discovery since it does not have to be shared with peers. Therefore, it does not have the same expectations of public writing. Private writing represents writing as process, not writing as a final product. Journal writing gives opportunity to think, not a place to be concerned with commas and fragments; whereas, public writing is the finished product "after it has been abandoned." (See Janet Emig, "Writing as a Mode of Learning," CCCC, 28 (May 1977), 122.)

Two types of private writing include:

1. Free writing for ten minutes a day. (Peter Elbow, Writing Without Teachers (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1973), p. 25)
2. Focused writing for teaching subject matter.

3. Discuss writing as problem solving. Do exercise on brainstorming as a means of generating topics. Use Flower and Hayes model in "Problem Solving Strategies and the Writing Process."

4. Discuss assertions or thesis statements as effective organizing principles in writing as discovery. Give the following exercise:

Assertion: I wonder?

Process: I suspect?

Product: I believe. (Bruffee)

5. Do exercise "Finding Organizing Principles" (Gerald Belcher).

6. Introduce concept of writing in progress, including stages for discovery or invention, drafting, and revising.

7. Explain peer review as a means of shifting responsibility to student in drafting and revising.

Topics for Workshop II: Assignment Strategies

1. Review Classical Modes of Discourse.

2. Introduce and discuss Kinneavy's Theory of Discourse including "Four ways of Looking at Objects" and the classification of modes of discourse according to Literature, Self-Expression, Exposition, Persuasion, Exploratory, Explaining and Proving (Give handout).

3. Ask participants to discuss and report as groups of five on the types of writing assignments required in their areas including audience and aim. Write responses on board. (Share handouts from Gail Hearn, Carol Schilling, Ned Wolfe and Barbara Nodine.)

4. Discuss the importance of identifying the audience in making assignments as related to content areas or different types of audiences.

5. Stress the importance of helping students to read and write in order to achieve some content objective.

   a. Give handout on Five-Step Teaching Strategies (Beyer, p. 33).
   b. Discuss reader based/writer based prose (Flower).
   c. Read from handout "Four Techniques" for giving clear, specific directions, to help students to organize writing (Beyer, p. 36).
   D. Refer to Two Sets of Guidelines "to wed instructions in processes of reading, comprehension, writing, and thinking, with learning of social studies" (Beyer, p. 36).

6. Emphasize the need for immediate feedback and time saving element involved

in peer review.

a. Give handouts on Questions for Peer Review (Gerald Belcher).

b. Give handout for student to use in evaluating his own writing (Gerald Belcher).

7. Discuss the necessary characteristics of a good assignment.

1. Create a plan (sense of purpose or aim).
2. Make hypothesis (thesis).
3. Provide guide for format (genre of shape).

8. Refer to Mina Shaughnessy's Errors and Expectations, especially Chapter 8, "Expectations," and Harvey Weiner's "Writing Successful Assignments" as good resources.

9. Explain why it is important for teachers to read and to write the same assignments that they give students so that their students can have models and so that they can test the effectiveness of writing assignments.

10. In the morning session ask the faculty to bring in their revised assignment in the afternoon and explain why they want to share their revision. This exercise should demonstrate Beyer's theory that "Teachers can help students improve their reading, writing, and content achievement by viewing the processes for what they are -- thinking."

Topics for Workshop III: Evaluation Strategies

1. Review writing as a learning process and making assignments as they relate to peer review and evaluating final drafts.

2. Discuss the table "Priorities and conventions in the writing process," (Maimon, "Chapter I", p. 9). Provide handout.

3. Discuss various methods of peer review.
   a) Explain "focus grouping" as a values clarification technique and a way to improve reading (Beyer, 23).
   b) Explain Fader's triad as a means of providing immediate and varied feedback as important to revision process (Beyer, p. 23).

4. Read "Student Paper A" (Gerald Belcher handout) in collaborative learning groups, gather responses from group reports, and shape responses by looking for a pattern. Refer to Nancy Sommers "Responding to Student Writing: Four Steps to Revision."

5. Explain ways to use what has been learned in revising writing assignments. Make list of procedures for improving writing of assignments.

6. Explain the efficiency of multiple drafting.
   1) It teaches student to be independent.
   2) It changes responsibility from the teacher to the student. (Revision becomes more productive work for student.)
   3) It saves time by requiring short assignments.

7. Suggest ways to keep open file system.

8. Share handouts "The Writing Process: Teaching Suggestions" and "Instructions for Final Copies of Papers" (Gerald Belcher).

9. Emphasize the importance of establishing dialogue with the student when he is engaged in the revising process.

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